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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4288
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2100
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1965
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2536
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2875

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001209

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: SHOOTING INCIDENT IN KHITROVKA

REF: ASHGABAT 1091

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Late on September 9, two men, one armed with an AK-47, killed a soldier in a three-person foot patrol and wounded another soldier and the policeman with him. The suspects escaped. Police sources claim the suspects were extremists or at least influenced by outsiders. It is unclear what they are, but violent, especially armed crime is unusual for Turkmenistan. And since the government has issued no statement on the incident, rumors continue to grow.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) A shooting incident the evening of September 9 in the Khitrovka district resulted in the death of one soldier and the wounding of his two companions, according to police sources. Three members of a foot patrol, consisting of one Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) police officer and two Ministry of Defense soldiers were attacked in the Khitrovka residential district late September 9 by two men, one armed with an AK-47. Khitrovka is a district of the city known for drug dealing and crime. One soldier was killed and the other soldier and the MVD officer were injured. The shooters escaped. Police believe these are the same men involved in a recent armed robbery of a gas station (reftel). The police have already captured two other suspects involved in the robbery.

¶3. (C) According to a police captain, foreign influence is suspected. This source said the criminals were either religious extremists or guerrillas trained by foreign government intelligence. Other, lower-level, policemen also alleged the suspects were "Wahhabis." One of the suspects was bearded. (NOTE: Post has e-mailed photos of the suspects to the Desk. END NOTE.)

¶4. (C) The authorities have beefed up security around the city in response to this incident. They increased the number of fixed and mobile posts. "TT" pistols have been distributed to all police officers. (NOTE: Police are rarely armed in Turkmenistan. END NOTE.) MVD officers are on 24-hour alert. Men wearing beards (also rare) have been stopped by police all over the city and questioned. The number of police officers on duty at the Embassy (and at other embassies) has been increased from two to three. There

is a visible increase in the number of policemen guarding government buildings, including the presidential palace and ministry buildings. RSO spotted these soldiers and police officers wearing bullet-proof vests and handgun holsters. Although security has increased, the city is its normal state of calm.

15. (C) COMMENT: The government has not issued any statement about the incident, and of course, there has been no reporting of it in the media. Consequently, rumors have flown about what took place, ranging from Wahhabi extremists shot police sitting on a park bench to police shot at a small group of people protesting price increases and government economic policy. As the government strictly controls information and the society gets much of its domestic information from rumnit, rumors are likely to grow about what happened.

16. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The sale of handguns and rifles is prohibited in Turkmenistan. The only weapons that are legal to possess are shotguns that are modified for hunting purposes only. The process for obtaining a hunting shotgun is usually limited to people associated with the Turkmenistan government, which makes this crime and the gas station robbery unusual. And begs the question of where the guns came from. Violent crime is rare.

17. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: We do not know if these armed criminals were associated with religious extremists or connected to drug dealing. (RSO will seek a briefing from

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MVD on the incident.) One suspect was bearded, so the authorities might have assumed "Wahhabi." The authorities may have simply assumed outside influence was a factor, finding it hard to believe that good Turkmen would do such a thing. One policeman told Embassy FSN, "they will be found anyway and very shortly. And when they are found, they will be sorry that they were born. They will be rubbed out together with all their relatives and friends." END COMMENT.
CURRAN